Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on "Implementing the 21st Century Cures Act: An Update from FDA and NIH"
November 30, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Today the Subcommittee will review the implementation of critical components of the 21st Century Cures Act, a transformational law intended to modernize the nation's biomedical innovation infrastructure. "Cures," as it's more commonly known was signed into law in December of 2016, following a multi-year effort led by our colleagues Fred Upton and Diana DeGette, the members of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and our friends at Senate HELP.

I'd also like to recognize a very special guest here with us today who has been a part of this journey since the very beginning—Max, you are an extraordinary young man and we are so glad you could be here.

The law is focused on uncovering opportunities to strengthen and streamline the process by which innovative medical products are discovered and made available to patients.

In our increasingly connected world where scientific innovation is outpacing government regulation, we have the potential to revolutionize medicine, and do more to reduce human suffering in the process.

Over the course of two Congresses, members of this committee consulted with leading scientists and medical experts, patient and disease group advocates, and researchers and innovators across multiple sectors to find ways to accelerate the critical cycle of discovering, developing, and delivering new cures and treatments.

I also held roundtables across my district in Oregon – in Medford, Bend, and Hermiston. I heard directly from patients about what finding a cure would mean for them. These patients had a real impact, and I'm grateful for their input.

We identified things the government could do to encourage innovation; and we also identified areas where government regulations and red tape were getting in the way of the revolutionary discoveries happening in labs across America. These initiatives culminated in the passage of the 21st Century Cures Act.

By increasing research collaboration, improving personalized medicine, investing in the next generation of young investigators, removing regulatory uncertainty, providing new drug development incentives, and modernizing clinical trials, Cures sought to maintain and enhance America's global status as the leader in biomedical innovation, and above all, save lives.

I am proud of this committee's work to identify opportunities to improve our health care system, and to advance legislative solutions in a thoughtful, responsible, and bipartisan manner. The 21st Century Cures Act ushered in the changes necessary to bring our laws into a modern era of medicine.

Time and time again we heard our former chairman proclaim that we were "on the cusp of something special" – the Path to Cures – and Fred, your words are just as true today. With Cures being law, it's of the utmost importance we get implementation right so this groundbreaking law can yield promising developments for patients across the country.

Today we will hear from the officials at the helm of implementing the research and development provisions authorized in the new law—NIH Director Francis Collins and FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb. I look forward to hearing more about how these solutions are being implemented to keep our nation at the forefront of innovation, and most importantly to deliver hope to millions of patients living with untreatable diseases.